

T H E R E H E A R S A L.

1. The Silence of the Dissenters shews their Consent to their Vindicator.
2. Of some English Divines who Join with them. And first of Dr. Edwards.
3. Of their Doctrin to take Free-Will from Men.
4. The Nothing of Episcopacy.
5. The Presbyterians make Church-Government a Fundamental.
6. Our Latitude-Men call it Moderation.
7. Which is Preach'd to the Church, not to the Dissenters, where it most Needs.

SATURDAY, August 2. 1707.

(1.) Country-man. **Y**OU have Satisfy'd me fully, Master, as to the Inclinations of the Presbyterians in Scotland, and of those in England, in Conjunction with them, to make all Britain One Presbyterian Church; so far as we may take the Word of their Vindicator. And it is in their Power to Clear themselves, if they think he has Misrepresented them, who speaks so Boldly in all their Names. If they will not, we know there are some Cases wherein Silence gives Consent.

But the Third thing you Promis'd is still behind, and which is harder for me to Believe than either of the two former, that is, That there shou'd be any of the Clergy of the Church of England who seems Favourable to their Designs: This wou'd be a strange Confederacy indeed.

(2.) Rehearsal. I have more to say as to the English Dissenters. But I will postpone that for a little time, that we be not Tedi-ous in dwelling too long upon one Point. And now we turn to some of the Church of England.

The first I produce you, for the purpose I mention'd is John Edwards D. D. of Cambridge his Discourse or Sermon upon the Union 1. May, 1707. Intitul'd, One Nation and One King, upon Ezek. xxxvii. 22. Printed 1707. He highly Commends the Old Puritan Notion of Predestination, which takes away Free-Will in Man. And, p. 10. he calls this Doctrin the Ramparts and Bulwarks of Christianity. And says, That the Church of England was once of these Principles. And herein (says he) they were back'd by the Church of Scotland—Thus the Church, I had almost (says he) call'd it the KIRK of ENGLAND, and that of our Neighbours were entirely One. The more Deplorable therefore it is to see how the Generality of our Clergy are Apostatiz'd, &c. And so he go's on to Prove them more Dissenters than the Non-Conformists; whom

he makes to be more truly the Church of England than the Establish'd Bishops and Clergy. The Topick the Dissenters have gone upon ever since the Revolution. And now they are back'd by Divines who Call themselves of the Church of England!

But Dr. Edwards go's on; and says p. 11. But we hope, that by the Concurrence of our Brethren in SCOTLAND, who are now One with us *Us*, the Number and Strength of those that profess the sound Doctrin of our Church will be Augmented.

And p. 12. he says, In time it may be Expected that the BELGICK and CALEDONIAN Divines, together with those at Home, will be Serviceable to Influence on our ARMINIAN Clergy, and be helpful to Re-Establish those abdicated Truths among *Us*, and to give a free Vent to the CALVINIAN Doctrines, which have been Stiff'd so long a time; and to Extirpate ARMINIANISM, which at this Day is the Plague of Christianity, and that Destruction which Wasteth at Noon-Day.

(3.) Country-m. Is it to the Doctrin of Free-Will he gives all these Terrible words? Well, if he has no Free-Will, he cou'd not help it! That may be his Excuse! And as little can I help wishing that this Blockish Doctrin may never come among us. And he must Excuse me, for the same Reason. What! Turn us all to Stocks and Stones, that we have no Choice or Freedom of Will left! What Ground is there then either for Rewards or Punishments? Will you Punish a Man for what he cannot Help? What are all the Promises and Threatnings in the Bible, if it be not in our Power to Act one way or other? How do's Conscience Check, but from our being sensible that we might have done otherwise than we have done? And why do we Endeavour to Mend, if we have no Choice left, but that all our Actions, and our very Thoughts, are already Determin'd by an Irreversible Decree? And do's not this make

make God the Author of all the Sins in the World?

Rehears. Nay, they put it out of God's Power to make a Creature with Freedom of Will, and Choice of his Actions, to go this way or that way as he Pleases; as being in their Conception, a Contradiction to their suppos'd Absolute Decree of God!

But we will talk of this another time. And I hope I shall be able, in a few words, to Discover to you, the Ground and Fallacie of their mistaken Notion of Predestination, and to set that Matter in an Intelligible Light. But I won't not Intermix Subjects, nor Divert from what we are now upon.

(4.) *Country-m.* This then is the Belgick and Caledonian, the Dutch and the Scotch Divinity, to which he wou'd have the Church of England Reform'd! But do's he say nothing of Episcopacy, nothing at all concerning the Government of the Church? For that is the Present matter in hand.

Rehears. He thinks it not worth Naming. But says, as above, That the Kirk in Scotland, and he had almost said the Kirk of England are now One, notwithstanding their Difference as to Church-Government. These Men make little of Government, either in Church or State! They have a Notion that Society can subsist without Government, or with any sort of Government. They make that the smallest Matter! And think Christ took no Care about it, nor left any settl'd Government in His Church; or if He did, that the People may Alter it, and Chop and Change it at their Pleasure!

(5.) *Country-m.* You speak now only of the Kirk of England, of the Episcopal-Presbyterians in our Church. For the Scottish Kirk are very Zealous in this matter, and think Church-Government a Fundamental, and Quote the business of Korah. Therefore they have Abjur'd Prelacy, and Engag'd their Lives and Fortunes to Oppose it to the utmost.

(6.) *Rehears.* Our Men of Latitude, of Free and Generous Thoughts, of Extensive and Comprehensive Charity, include Church-Government under the Name of Moderation. This is one of the things wherein we are to be Moderate and Indifferent, and not Dispute the Point, to the Disturbance of our Peace and Tranquility!

Therefore says Dr. Edwards, p. 17. It is my Perswasion, That nothing will be more Destructive to our Excellent Church, than that Excessive Height to which some wou'd screw it up. It hath fallen once by these Methods, and it may do so again; but I heartily offer my Advice to prevent it, that is, in one word, let us be MODERATE. I verily believe, that there can never happen so great Inconvenience and Mischief to our Church by DISSENTING MEETINGS, as by Rigid and Violent Impositions.

(7.) *Country-m.* What do's he mean by Rigid and Violent Impositions? Why do's he bring that in NOW? Are ther any such at this Day? Have not the Dissenters a full and free Toleration? And are they Content with it? Do they not Plead it as an Establishment, and thereby put themselves upon the Level with the Church? Nay, do they not set themselves up as the True Church of England? And do's not this same Doctor support them in it, and Argue for it? Were they ever so Outragious against the Church as since their Toleration? Have they not Plaid their whole Artillery of numberless Pamphlets, Observators, Reviews, &c. upon her, more since than Ever? And more violently since the Union than before? And tell us NOW Plainly in their Vindicator, That they will Accept of no Terms or Compositions, less than the Destruction of the Episcopal Hierarchy, and to have whole Britain one Presbyterian Church? As you have before fully shew'd. And has not Dr. Edwards set them up Now upon the Union, as a Pattern for our Reformation? Yet still he Preaches Moderation to Us! But not a word of Moderation to the Dissenters, to Abate of their Fury against the Church! No. It is all Godly Zeal in Them! But for Us, in one word, let us be MODERATE!

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